

Fighting 13th



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The 13th MEU(SOC) Newsletter

www.usmc.mil/13thmeu

BLT 2/1 spearheads 'Operation Steel Curtain'



Photo by Cpl. Chad H. Leddy

Lance Cpl. Enrique Diaz, a rifleman with Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, engages insurgent targets from a hasty position behind an M1A1 Abrams Main Battle tank during a heavy firefight in Husaybah Nov. 5. Eliminating insurgent fighters and destroying Al Qaeda in Iraq networks were high priorities during Operation Steel Curtain, the latest of combat operations for the battalion.

By Cpl. Andy J. Hurt
Combat Correspondent

HUSAYBAH, Iraq (Nov. 9, 2005) – The Marines of Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines played a major role in the battles of Operation Steel Curtain, beginning Nov. 5 in the North-west Al Anbar Province.

The battalion, in a joint effort with 3/6 and Iraqi Security

Forces under Regimental Combat Team 2, swept the towns of Husaybah, Karibalah and Ubati in the historic operation, aimed at digging out insurgent strongholds and setting a state of security for the upcoming Iraqi elections.

After four days of intense fighting in Husaybah, a town of about 30,000, BLT 2/1, the Ground Combat Element of the

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, held a firm position in west Karibalah while 3/6 pushed through, and prepared to assault Ubati.

While the operation was most likely a series of lines and numbers drawn into a satellite image, somewhere deep in the rear, the real fight was at the company and squad level.

"We were sweeping through and clearing every single building," said Sgt. Anthony Vallarde, a squad leader from 3rd Platoon, Golf Company, 2/1.

"It was supposed to be 'attack and clear', but there have been a lot of civilians

here," said the Baldwin Park, Calif., native.

During the battles of Husaybah, Karibalah and Ubati, a heavy barrage of rockets, Close Air Support, Tanks and demolitions were heard around the clock, sweet music to the ears of Marines in the streets.

The participation by 2/1 marked the battalion's latest combat operation since assaulting

Fallujah in early 2004.

Lieutenant Jeff Mast, Golf Company executive officer, said he considered the combat stages of the operation a "very high" success and attributed it to the fast, methodical movement of the individual fire teams and squads.

"We're moving so quickly ... the enemy knows we're too strong of a force and they're heading east," he said.

Another attribution of success, said Mast, was the solid integration of the Iraqi Security forces on the platoon level.

"I think the integration of the Iraqi (Security Forces) was a great idea. I know it's not the first time, but these troops are much better trained, more mature and willing to fight (alongside) Marines," said Mast. "It's their country."

Though the battalion claimed a high number of

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Amazing ... Full-page photo feature from Operation Iraqi Freedom!

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Chaplain Jensen reflects on hectic November

A month of change and celebration can also be a month of prayer and devotion ...

By Navy Commander Val J. Jensen
13th MEU (SOC) Command Chaplain

November is the month that tells us we are soon at the sunset of the year. Some days are warm while others are cool in most parts of our nation. November is a time of transition in which change occurs in just about every quarter. For many there is reflection on where the year has gone and for those who are getting older the year and years have passed so quickly. It is said that for the younger a month seems like a year while for the elder a year seems like a month. There may be those of such a mindset who anticipate finishing off 2005 as to discover what may be in store for 2006.

The 230th birthday of the United States Marine Corps is 10 November 2005. Hundreds of years have passed and still the tradition remains the same. Monumen-

tal accomplishments through heroic efforts are integral parts of the history of our great Republic. The strength of the past is seen in the present fabric of the USMC.

Generations of Marines standing in history with Marines of today are sending forth a clarion call to the Marines of tomorrow - a call to distinguished service and the opportunity to contribute in ways that are truly important.

We wish a blessed and most Happy Birthday to the "Soldiers of the Sea"

Finally, at the end of the month we celebrate Thanksgiving. Early settlers were



thankful when the harvest was good and they had enough to see them through the winter.

The time, effort, and other resources put into their lands resulted in their receiving bountifully and in turn for this good fortune they were grateful to God. Today, we too can be appreciative for all that has been given to us and consequently seek the Almighty to see in what ways we may be of greater service.

As a result, we might pray the words found in the USMC devotional field book. "Almighty God, draw our hearts to you, guide our minds, fill our imaginations, control our wills, so that we may be wholly yours.

"Use us as you will, always to your glory and the welfare of your people. Amen"

Chaplain Jensen

13th MEU (SOC) Marines receive quick, motivational mail

By Sgt. Charles Moore

Combat Correspondent
ALANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq
(Oct. 22, 2005) – Mail often takes more than a week to reach servicemembers here, so many families rely on e-mails to keep in touch with their loved ones. For many military personnel, limited access to computers prevents this.

Until now, they just had to wait, but that is rapidly changing.

Motomail can now get letters to servicemembers in less than 24 hours.

The program, a model of the British "E-bluey" mail system, provides faster mail delivery through electronics.

"That (Motomail) is quick. My wife sent it yesterday at 5 p.m. and I got it today," said Cpl. Daniel B. Britt, tactical security, Marine Expeditionary Unit Service Support Group 13, 13th MEU.

"I wish my (regular mail) package would get here that quick."

Family and friends can send typed letters through the Motomail website, or scan letters at various locations on bases.

The letter is then sent electronically to a Motomail system near the servicemember.



Photo by Sgt. Charles E. Moore
Cpl. Daniel B. Britt, reads a piece of Motomail at the end of the day Oct. 22 in Kuwait.

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The Fighting 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)



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From the 13th MEU(SOC) Commanding Officer

Families and Friends,

November was challenging and is quickly coming to an end. The BLT recently returned from Operation Steel Curtain where they successfully cleared through three cities in northern Iraq. The Marines fought hard, with courage and never lost momentum. The Marines and Sailors of the Fighting 13th continue to answer the call regardless of the time or place.

As many of you know, we lost eight Marines during combat operations. The spirit of these Marines remains in our hearts and their memory never leaves our thoughts. A memorial service was held here Thanksgiving Day to honor their lives and give thanks for their sacrifice, service and unwavering courage. *The BLT Marines are true "professionals" as their motto states.* The ceremony was an opportunity for the

command and their fellow Marines to pay proper respect and reflect on the how each one of their lives touched so many.

In December, Iraq will hold elections in hopes that one day they will also experience the freedoms that our brave Marines and Sailors fight for every day. The Fighting 13th is here to ensure the elections are a success for the people of Iraq, bringing them one step closer to permanent stability, security and independence.

This is a difficult time of year for service members and family members to be separated. I encourage you to stay connected to your Marine and Sailor through our Key Volunteer Network and website. Many of you will be traveling throughout the holiday season to visit family and friends. Please update your contact information with the Key Volunteer

Coordinators and Advisors so they can keep you abreast of any changes or events throughout the coming weeks.

The initial request forms concerning the Tiger Cruise were distributed to Marines and Sailors this past week. Information packets and invitations from the ship will be distributed to Tigers mid-December. If you have questions or concerns about the Tiger Cruise, please contact our public affairs officer at maluganiae@13meufwd.usmc.mil.

As each day passes, we move one day closer to reuniting with our loved ones in February. Thank you for your strength, continued support and understanding throughout the deployment. We may be operating thousands of miles from home, but you are with us in spirit every day.

**Semper Fidelis,
Col. J. K. La Vine**

Hometown Heroes



This month's hometown hero is **Cpl. Timothy R. Ooley** of Fresno, Calif. Ooley is a Special Intelligence Systems Administrator with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit's Command Element Intelligence section. The 23 year-old Marine is currently deployed to the Al Anbar Province of Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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The letter is printed and sealed by machine, before it is delivered.

"It came like a check in the mail. You just rip the ends off," said the 24-year-old Surrey Va., native.

"It's an emergency love letter."

Staff Sgt. Tijani Harris, postal chief, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, said the system is secure.

The Alexandria, Va., native said the Motomail machine is activated when it shows incoming mail.

A short time later, the letters are sealed and ready to be delivered.

Family and friends wishing to use Motomail can go to the website to create an account.

The six-step registration process takes about five minutes and creates an account, as well as an address book.

Sending a letter takes only the time required to write or type it. Sending Motomail is free, but users are limited to how much mail they can send.



Letters are limited to one page, and users can send a maximum of five letters per day.

The service, supported by Marine Corps Postal Affairs and Marine Corps Community Services, was first tested two years ago at Camp Fox, Kuwait, using the British system that was designed in 1999.

The system has since grown to include most overseas locations.

For more information on Motomail, or to send a letter, go to www.motomail.us.

Command Element Family Info/Admin Notes

Savings Deposit Program

Members of the 13th MEU are now eligible to deposit money into the Savings Deposit Program.

The SDP is a Department of Defense-sponsored savings account that allows service members in designated combat zones (or supporting a combat zone for 30 consecutive days) to deposit the amount of one month's basic pay at one time and gain 10 percent annual interest. Cash deposits or pay allotments can be requested. The funds can be kept in the account for 90 days after the service member leaves the combat zone.

The maximum amount of money that can accumulate interest is \$10,000.

For more information, contact the 13th MEU (SOC) dispersing officer, Capt. Anthony Glasgow, by emailing glasgowAD@tarawa.usmc.mil.

Tiger Cruise Info

The USS Tarawa is in the process of organizing a "Tiger Cruise" on our return trip from Pearl Harbor to San Diego. The Tiger Cruise is, of course, pending operational involvement of the 13th MEU (SOC).

Our "Tigers" will meet the ship in Hawaii near the end of our deployment and accompany us on our return to homeport.

"Tiger Cruise" is a special guest cruise program where Sailors and Marines are permitted to embark friends and relatives.

The only expense will be the cost of the Tiger's meals while onboard TARAWA.

Look for the "Tiger Sponsorship" form, scheduled to be published this month at

www.usmc.mil/13thmeu.

13th MEU(SOC) Mailing Addresses

Due to the on going Western Pacific deployment, official and personal mailing addresses have been modified to according to operational conditions.

The official unit mailing address is as follows:

COMMANDING OFFICER
ATTN (SECTION)
13TH MEU
UNIT 42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

The personal mailing address is as follows:

GRADE/NAME/USMC
13TH MEU (SECTION)
UNIT 42525
FPO AP 96610-2525

13th MEU Merchandise

The season for giving is now upon us and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) is prepared for the holiday rush with a variety of authentic 13th MEU (SOC) gear and apparel. Premium items including unit coins, sports bottles and the ever-popular "Fighting 13th" t-shirts (in sizes ranging from small to extra-large) are currently available for purchase from the 13th MEU (SOC) Public Affairs Office by the Marines and Sailors currently deployed to the Al Anbar Province of Iraq. Don't miss the opportunity to show your support for the Fighting 13th at home by having your service member send presents bearing the official insignia of the 13th MEU (SOC). Prices and availability of items are also available through PAO.

13th MEU Warrior Birthdays - November -

Sgt. Andria J. Green -- Nov. 2
S-2 Intel Analyst

Cpl. Linda R. Hammock -- Nov. 2
S-2 Intel Analyst

Sgt. Matthew G. Hansen -- Nov. 22
S-6 Data Systems Specialist

Lt. Col. Anthony R. Herlihy -- Nov. 8
13th MEU Operations Officer

Sgt. Joshua B. Herring -- Nov. 30
S-6 Radio Operator

SSgt. Lynn G. Holkesvik -- Nov. 14
S-1 Disbursing Chief

GySgt. Thomas B. Lanham -- Nov. 16
S-6 Radio Chief

Cpl. Chad H. Leddy -- Nov. 14
S-5 Combat Camera Chief

Sgt. Matthew R. Menard -- Nov. 13
S-2 Intelligence Specialist

SSgt. Timothy G. Otto -- Nov. 6
S-6 Sattelite Communications Technician

GySgt. Albino Parra -- Nov. 7
S-1 Admin Chief

SSgt. Van E. Seely -- Nov. 19
Force Recon Marine

Cpl. Shawn C. Snow -- Nov. 22
Radio Recon Team

BLT 2/1 remembers fallen comrades on Thanksgiving



Photo by Cpl. Chad H. Leddy

By Cpl. Andy J. Hurt
 Combat Correspondent
 AL ASAD, Iraq (Nov. 24, 2005) – In a somber ceremony following three weeks of intense fighting near the Syrian border, the Marines of Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines held a ceremony to honor eight warriors who gave their lives for their country.

The ceremony was held in the early afternoon hours of Thanksgiving Day, more

commonly known as a time when American families come together to show appreciation for their blessings throughout the year.

For BLT 2/1, the day will stand forever as a day of remembrance of the dedication that makes our country, and the Marine Corps, great.

“The loss of these Marines is irreplaceable,” said Capt. Ross A. Parrish,

Commander, Company F, BLT 2/1.

Parrish praised the heroes, who died in the pursuit of saving their brothers’ lives, as “selfless” individuals, who understood the meaning of honor and service.

“They are heroes in our eyes and our hearts,” he said.

Parrish then read a poem found in the wallet of 1st Lt. Donald McGlothlin, a platoon commander with Company F, BLT 2/1,

entitled “Don’t Quit.”

It was a poem that McGlothlin read during his valedictorian speech in front of his high school graduating class.

Following Parrish, Lt. Col. Robert Oltman, commander, BLT 2/1, offered his thoughts on holding a memorial service on Thanksgiving Day.

He said that some people may have raised doubts about the appropriateness of the chosen date for the service.

“In my heart, I feel the contrary,” Oltman started, “What better way to show our appreciation for these Marines?” Oltman also dedicated a few moments of his speech to Maj. Ramon Mendoza, Jr., the former commander of Company E, BLT 2/1, who was killed by an improvised explosive device shortly after crossing the line of departure into the battle of Ubaydi.

Oltman read a eulogy from Mendoza’s head wrestling coach from Ohio State University, Russ Hellickson.

Oltman then expressed how, in the wake of the heroic sacrifices made by Mendoza, McGlothlin, Cpl. John M. Longoria, Cpl. Jeffrey A. Rodgers, Cpl. Joshua J. Ware, Lance Cpl. Roger W. Deeds, Lance Cpl. John A. Lucente and Lance Cpl. Christopher M. McCrackin, the battalion will push on.

“Every one of these Marines would have wanted us to continue on and finish what we started,” he said.

“Our work here is not done.”

According to Oltman, the unit will continue to make preparations for their mission for the upcoming democratic elections.

“This is a sad reminder that our enemy has a vote,” Oltman said, “but I promise you, as commander of this battalion, I will ensure (enemy) vote doesn’t count.”

STEEL

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insurgent souls during the fighting, a total of eight Marines from 2/1, including Fox Company commander Maj. Ray Mendoza, gave their lives to the Global War on Terrorism – a sad reminder that the cost of freedom is great.

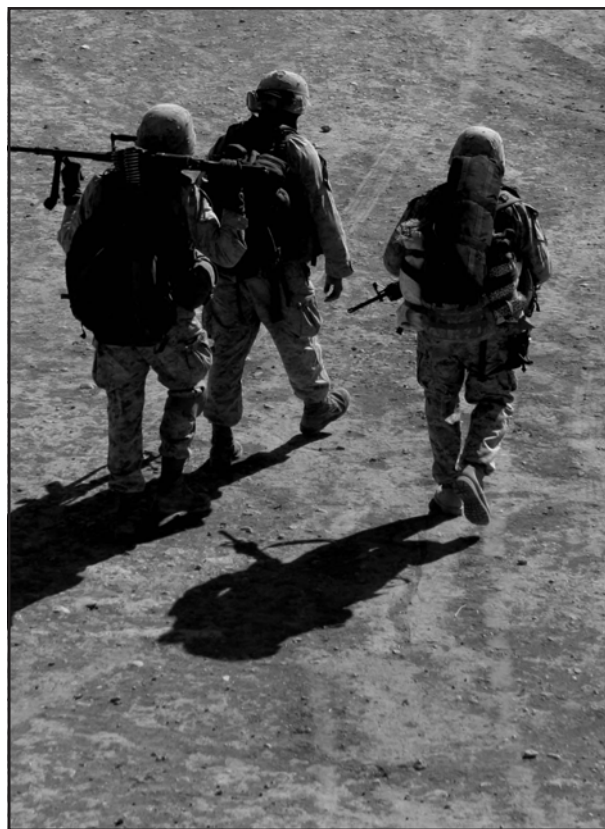
When a command turnover with 3/6 was completed in Ubati after 2/1 had secured the city, the battalion packed up and moved out to prepare for another mission, another day and perhaps another fight.

Wherever freedom calls, 'The Professionals' are ready.



CURTAIN

See Page 7 for more 13th MEU photos from Operation Steel Curtain

Operation Steel Curtain - (continued)

For more OIF photos and information, visit www.usmc.mil/13thmeu

M-249 SAW



Coloring Page!

Kids AND adults: Color this page and write a message to a Marine or Sailor of the Fighting 13th MEU. Mail your page to:

Commanding Officer
ATTN: PAO
13th MEU
Unit 4225
FPO AP 96610-2525

We'll take sent masterpieces and post them aboard the ship! Remember:
Have fun and we look forward to your artistic expression!